MY

COUSIN HESTER.

REVISED BY THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION OF THE AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION.

PHILADELPHIA:
American Sunday-School Union,
No. 146 CHESTNUT STREET.

"There was a windmill on the green."
Page 7.

MY

COUSIN HESTER.

REVISED BY THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION OF THE AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION.

PHILADELPHIA:

AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION,

NO. 146 CHESTNUT STREET.

Entered according to act of Congress, in the year 1846, by the *American Sunday-school Union*, in the clerk's office of the District Court of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

MY COUSIN HESTER.

WHEN I was about ten years old, I went, with my brother Frank, to spend a month in a pleasant village which lay among the hills of Surrey, and was just fourteen miles from London, where our parents lived. We went to visit our aunt and our three cousins, Henry, Hester, and John. But I should tell you, in the first place, that my name is Anna Spencer; and at the time I speak of, not having been quite well for some weeks, I am afraid I had been a little spoiled by my kind mother, so that during the first few days of my stay in the village, I gave

much trouble, both by my fretful temper, and by the idle habits which I had formed. I am happy to say that my aunt's gentle reproof, and the manner in which she pointed out my faults, joined with the pattern of good conduct that I had before me in my cousin Hester, soon worked a change for the better; for if this had not been the case, my visit would have been far from a pleasant one, and I could never have looked back to the time without feelings of shame and sorrow.

My aunt lived in a pretty cottage, which was half hidden by trees, and stood a little way down the hill to the right of the village green. Many a merry game of play have I had on that village green! It was there, when the breeze sprung up, that Frank and my cousins tried their kites; and from thence, when we were tired of watch-

ing them, Hester and I used to set off on one of our long rambles, with Dash running and frisking beside us. There was a windmill on the green; and once the miller kindly asked us inside, and took us up to the top, and showed us the large wheels turning round, and the heavy stones which ground the flour. This was a great treat to us; and I believe we all wished to pay the kind miller a second visit; but this my aunt would not permit, as she said there was great danger in such places, unless persons were more careful than we were likely to be. She was not easy until we had each given a promise that we would not go again to the mill; and in a very short time we had a proof that my good aunt knew what was best for us, and were led to be thankful for her care in keeping us out of the way of harm.

A boy from the village was in the mill, and being careless and headstrong, he went too near the large wheel, when his foot was crushed against the wall, and so much hurt that it was said he would be lame as long as he lived. We were very sorry for the poor boy; and we saw that it was well to take the advice of those older and wiser than ourselves. It was a lesson to me which I never quite forgot. Oh! how much danger, both to soul and body, might young folks avoid, if they would hear and obey the counsel of parents or friends, who have lived many years in the world, and know its evils and its snares!

Hester and I used often to walk to the churchyard on a cheerful summer day, for it was indeed a pleasant spot. Sometimes we sat for an hour or

more upon an old tomb-stone, and Hester would repeat verses to me, or tell me little stories which she had read, of children like ourselves. At other times, we used to wander among the graves, reading the names of those who lay beneath; and once we took notice how many there were who had died at an early age, and felt much surprise at the number of *little* hillocks which rose around.

"We are not too young to die," said Hester, that day, looking very thoughtful, as we sat down for a few minutes. "We should think of this sometimes, dear Anna, and pray that God would pardon our sins for Christ's sake, and that our hearts may be changed and made fit for the society of heaven."

"But I do not like to think about dying," said I. "I do not like to think of the narrow and dark grave."

"You know that only the body lies there," said Hester; "the body which will moulder and turn to dust, while the soul lives for ever and ever. But just think, if we love the Saviour now and try to do his will, how happy our souls will be when he takes us to be with him in heaven. There we shall know neither sin, nor pain, nor sorrow; for God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes."

"How strangely you are talking, Hester," said I, "as if it were a happy thing to die!"

"And must it not be a happy thing," said my cousin, "to be with Jesus, and with saints and angels; and never more to sin? There we shall join in the song of praise to Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; and oh! think, dear Anna, if it is so good and joyful for us

to give him thanks in his church below, what must it be to stand before his throne in heaven, and praise him there?"

At this time, I knew very little about the Saviour, and I did not agree with my cousin in thinking it a joyful thing to give thanks to God. When I knelt to pray, my thoughts used to wander away to other matters; and in the house of God, though I liked to hear the organ and the singing, I never wished to know the meaning of the words, nor tried to praise God with my heart. I was a sinner, but I did not feel any sorrow for my sins, and I always put the thought of them out of my mind as soon as I could.

Hester must have known something of this; for when she found that I made no reply, she put her arm round

my neck, and drew closer to me as we sat side by side. "Dear cousin," she said,—but so gently that it sounded almost like a whisper,—"if you will come to Jesus, he will teach you the way to be happy, whether you live or die. He will forgive all your sins, and give you a new and holy heart, that you may love him and delight in his ways."

I was not pleased to hear Hester speak about my sins, and I told her, in an angry voice, that I was not worse than other children.

"Pray do not be angry with me, dear cousin," said Hester; and as she turned her earnest face towards me, I saw that her eyes were full of tears. So I kissed her, and forgave her, and when we were friends again, I told her to go on with what she wished to say.

"The Bible tells us," said Hester, "that 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;' for we have all a sinful nature, with which we were born, and so we cannot of ourselves love Jesus, our Saviour, nor take pleasure in thinking about heaven. But God has said that, if we ask him, he will send his Holy Spirit into our hearts, to change our evil nature, and to take away the love of sin. Now, this is what I try to do, dear cousin; I try to pray that I may be made a child of God, for Jesus Christ's sake; and I think I have been more happy since I did so, and have felt less afraid of death."

"But why should you think about death?" I asked. "You are strong and healthy, stronger than I am; and yet, even when I was ill, I did not think of dying."

Hester looked sadly in my face, and was silent for some minutes. "You forget," she said, at last, "that death is sometimes very sudden, and comes to the young as well as to the old. Surely we should think of it often, and pray that our souls may be ready."

I did not reply, and Hester said no more. We walked home more slowly than was our custom at other times, and I could not help thinking of what she had been saying. I felt sad, and out of spirits, until, as we turned to go down the lane, we saw Frank and my cousins coming to meet us, and, in talking to them, I soon forgot all that had passed.

The Sunday-school was a place to which Hester often took me, for she was fond of going there, and liked to help in teaching the little ones to read. She said that we could not too soon

begin to be useful, and that, young as we were, there could be no harm in trying to do good to others yet younger than ourselves. I often think of Hester's sayings when I see the elder children, in a house, careless about their little brothers and sisters; and, with the hope that it may do them good, I sometimes repeat her gentle whisper to me, as I sat idly in the school-room: "Try to be useful"—and, "It is never too soon to begin."

At the Sunday-school my cousin had a little class of her own; and I never saw her look more happy than when she sat, with the children round her, hearing them repeat texts of Scripture, or the hymns which she had taught them. She was kind and gentle towards them, and never spoke in a sharp or angry manner; yet she did not suffer them to talk or play in

school, and always knew how to reprove them when they did wrong. Sometimes she would talk to them in her own simple way, and beg of them to pray for the Holy Spirit, that they might all love God, and be good children: and then she would tell them that Jesus, the Son of God, had left his glory above, and came down to die upon the cross, that their souls might go to heaven.

I used to wonder how she could think of all these things to say to the children; but I found, from my aunt, (for Hester never said one word about it,) that she was in the habit of reading her Bible each day, alone, in her own room, and of praying to God for his blessing on what she read. Now, I did not like reading the Bible; and it seemed strange to me that Hester should be fond of a book which I

thought so dull. I did not then know that the sinful heart of man must be changed before it can love the things of God; and it was because I had never prayed for this change of heart, nor asked to be kept from sin, that I was in most respects so little like my cousin.

At home, Hester was always cheerful and busy, helping her mother, or doing something for her brothers, and never seeming to think of herself. This kindness to others made them all love her, so that quarrels were not known among them; and the thought of this made me feel some shame when more than once it fell out that there were angry words between Frank and myself. I began to see how much better it is to live in love; and I hope that from that time I was less hasty towards my dear brother, and tried to

check the selfish feelings which had often caused me to be unkind.

How sorry we both were when the day came for us to leave the pretty village, and to say farewell to our good aunt and cousins! Hester and I had taken our last walk the night before. We had gone past the schoolhouse, and over the green; then down the lane, and across the fields to the churchyard. We sat for the last time and leaned awhile on the old tombstone, and cried very much. We then took comfort in saying we would write letters to each other, and never, never forget the happy time we had spent. We did not break that promise; for neither of us forgot that happy, happy time.

It was settled between our parents that if all were well, Frank and I should go again the next summer to

the village. A year was a long time to wait, and we parted with many tears, though trying to comfort each other with the hope of meeting again.

I can still think I see my cousin Hester, as she stood leaning over the garden-gate to watch the carriage till it passed out of sight at the turning of the lane. My good and gentle cousin Hester! No, never shall I forget her sweet, mild face, her meek and loving temper, and her acts of daily kindness. While I was with her, I never thought of the true cause of all her goodness; but now I know that it could only come from God, by the help of his Holy Spirit. From her early childhood, she had been taken into the Saviour's fold; and she prayed for the grace of God that she might be like the holy Jesus, who did no sin;

and who desires that even little children should obey his Father's will.

Before the winter was over, we had a letter from my aunt to tell us that our dear Hester was very ill, and there was no hope that her life could be saved. I wept, yet I could not believe that she would die; but my mother went to the village that same day, and very soon a second letter came—it was sealed with black—and then I knew that my cousin Hester was dead.

In this letter was a small sheet of paper, closely folded, on which, in her own handwriting, were the words, "For my dear cousin, Anna Spencer." She had written it when first she was taken ill, and had begged that, if she should die, it might be sent to me.

"DEAREST ANNA,

"I am very ill, and I do not think

I shall get well. *Now*, dear cousin, I think a great deal of what we once talked about as we sat in the churchyard, and such thoughts seem more important than they did then. What a fearful thing it would be to die, if we had no hope of going to heaven! And how can we hope to go to heaven, if we do not believe in Jesus, nor love him, for he is the only way. Dear Anna, pray forgive me this time, if I say that I am afraid you do not think of these things; and if I ask as my last request that you will come to Jesus, who is ready to receive you, and to pardon all your sins. I hope we shall meet again in heaven. I am not afraid to die, because I believe that Jesus Christ has washed away all my sins. He died upon the cross to save my soul, and he is willing to save you. Dearest Anna, seek him with all your

heart, is the last request of your dying cousin

"HESTER."

Can I ever forget my cousin Hester? Can I ever part with her farewell letter, or neglect her last request?

May I have grace to seek my Saviour now in the days of my youth, and to prepare for death while time and health are given to me; that, when God shall call me away from this world, my soul may go to be for ever happy with him. And while I live, I pray that he will help me by his Spirit to hate all sinful ways; and to give myself with all my heart to His service, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

New and beautiful Prints of Art.

The American Sunday-school Union have just published

FOUR BEAUTIFUL COLOURED PRINTS,

VIZ.:

The SHIP and its Furniture.
The DAIRY, and its Products.
The BOOKBINDER'S SHOP.
The CAMEL, its Employments and Uses.

☞ These prints are peculiar for the variety and beauty of the objects presented to the eye. The instruction and entertainment they afford could not be easily obtained in any other form, at so low a price.

For sale at the Society's Depositories, at $1 *the Set.*

DESCRIPTIVE PRINTS.

The American Sunday-school Union, No. 146 Chestnut street, Philadelphia, in its multitude of efforts to do good to the young, has just published a series of beautiful and instructive engravings on large sheets, and coloured with the richest tints, which will no doubt meet with an extensive sale. They are entitled:

The Ship and its Furniture.—A splendid model of an American Man-of-War, lying at anchor, her flags flying, her foresail hauled up, her maintopsail loosed, and the rest of her sails furled. She is in beautiful trim. On the same picture we find a great variety of her furniture, with copious references.

The Camel, its employments and uses.—This is elegant, and so natural, and so well coloured. The Caravan crossing the desert, and the Mohammedans worshipping the sacred camel, are very novel. But all of them are very characteristic.

The Dairy and its Products.—This print will interest all the children, because they are familiar with every domestic scene represented, unless it is with one, of a man descending the steps with a candle in his hand, and that we could not unravel.

The Bookbinder's Shop.—Here is much light thrown upon Bookbinding. It appears so intelligent, that you may almost learn the various processes of the trade.—*Baptist Record.*